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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to ascertain a) the distribution of student teaching letter grades in 29 Iowa teacher education institutions from 1967-70; b) the predictive value of student teaching letter grades held by superintendents; and c) the preference of Iowa superintendents concerning the present letter grade and recommendation system versus the pass/fail system and written evaluation of the student teaching experience system. The data was gathered through questionnaires sent to each Iowa superintendent, the directors of student teaching at 29 teacher education institutions, and the directors of placement services at these institutions. Results revealed a) the distribution of letter grades was A-40%, B-50%, C-9%, and D-F-1%; b) Iowa superintendents attached a greater predictive value to the recommendation rather than the letter grade of the student teacher; and c) superintendents preferred the pass/fail system with a written evaluation rather than the present letter grade/recommendation system. (The implications of these results are discussed. Appendixes present the questionnaires used in the study along with forms for grade distribution and evaluation. An 11-item bibliography is also included.) (BRB)

AN ANALYSIS OF IOWA SUPERINTENDENTS' OPINIONS CONCERNING MARKING SYSTEMS FOR THE STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE

by

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A research paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Educational Specialist in the College of Education in the Graduate College of the University of Iowa

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

The preparation of teachers in Iowa colleges and universities includes a period of internship, during which time the prospective teacher has an opportunity to function in a practical classroom setting. Actual "student teaching" time may vary from several weeks to a full semester or more, depending upon the existing situations at the cooperating elementary or secondary school, and the policies of the college or university. Of all the specific catalog offerings of Colleges of Education, the practice teaching experience is generally held by its graduates to be the most important and helpful item in the teacher preparation program (Mason, 145). Students seem to endorse the "block plan of student teaching ... as the most valuable education course." (Stiles, 188).

This student teaching phase of a teacher education program has for years been marked in Iowa in the same manner as any academic offering. In 1963, Martin found that 23 of the 24 Iowa elementary teacher education institutions assigned letter grades for the student teaching experience (Martin, 149). One might conjecture that since student teaching is the closest approach in the college years to actual on-the-job performance, the letter grade assigned for this phase of the program should be a fairly reliable indicator

of the assignee's future success in teaching, and therefore would be of considerable assistance to employing superintendents. However, Dr. Paul C. Pickett, of Upper Iowa College, has compiled teacher success studies over the past several years, in which superintendents' ratings of first year teachers have been correlated with the teachers' student teaching grades. His findings have prompted him to state, "It appears that student teaching grades are not very good predictors of ratings received in the first year of teaching." (Pickett, 1).

During this same period of time, especially in the Ivy League schools, there has developed a trend toward awarding a "pass" or "fail" mark in curricular offerings. It has been suggested in some quarters that the student teaching experience lends itself most handily to this marking system (Armstrong, 1) because of the large number of variables involved in the make-up of a teacher. In addition, the advent of differentiated staffing in some school systems, because of its varied job descriptions, makes it even more difficult to place a teacher in a category with a simple mark of "A" or "C".

If the letter grade were abolished in favor of a pass/fail mark, the question arises as to what will serve as a distinguishing element between and among the student teachers. Proponents of the pass/fail marking procedure suggest that a discriminating instrument should accompany the pass/fail mark, and that this should be in the form of a comprehensive written evaluation of the student teacher's strengths and weaknesses in the areas of knowledge of the subject,

ability to motivate groups and/or individuals, successful performance with different age groups and ethnic groups, attitude toward professional development, curriculum design, and professional and personal relationships with fellow teachers.

Need for the Study

Whenever a college faculty discusses the possibility of the installation of the pass/fail (P/F) system for marking student teaching performance, the question inevitably arises concerning the acceptance by employing superintendents of this procedure - whether the college would in fact be placing their graduates in a position of disadvantage. Studies concerning this facet of superintendents' attitudes are sparse, at best.

The writer's conversations with experienced Iowa elementary and secondary school executives have indicated that on the whole, in their opinion, student teaching marking has been less than discriminating, and that a number of recommendations have been so general as to be of little use to an employing official. Again, studies which actually delineate the percentage of A's, B's, C's, etc., awarded for the student teaching phase of teacher education are virtually non-existent.

Objectives of the Study

The study was designed with the following main objectives in mind:

1. To ascertain the distribution of the student teaching grades of elementary and secondary student teachers in

the 29 Iowa teacher education institutions for the past three years (1967-1968, 1968-1969, 1969-1970).

2. To ascertain the estimate held by Iowa employing superintendents concerning the nature of this distribution.

3. To ascertain the predictive value (for future teacher success) attached to the present student teaching letter grades by Iowa employing superintendents, compared with the predictive value of the typical recommendation.

4. To ascertain the preferences of Iowa employing superintendents concerning:

a) the present grade and recommendation system

b) pass/fail credit and a comprehensive written evaluation of the student teaching experience.

(The years 1967-1968, 1968-1969, and 1969-1970 were chosen somewhat arbitrarily - compromising between the desirability of a large sample, and the ready availability of the grades themselves.)

In addition, some sub-objectives of the study were:

a) to ascertain the range of student teaching grade distributions (most liberal assignment of A's to least liberal) by college or university.

b) to ascertain the contents of credentials forwarded by placement offices at the 29 Iowa teacher education institutions.

c) to discover the differences in attitudes, if any, existing among superintendents in various sizes of school systems concerning pass/fail grading of student teachers.

d) to ascertain the present status of, and future plans for, the pass/fail student teaching grading system at the Iowa teacher education institutions.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

There is little research available directly related to the objectives and sub-objectives of this study; none, in fact, was found that was associated with a compilation of student teaching letter grade distributions.

Superintendents' Attitudes Toward Pass/Fail For Student Teaching

Predictors of Teacher Success

Aven and Breazier, at Tarkio (Missouri) College, sent an inquiry form to two hundred Missouri superintendents - 61.5% response was obtained. Approximately three-fourths of these officials stated that the letter grade a person receives for student teaching does not indicate his future success as a teacher (Aven and Breazier, 47).

Pickett, at Upper Iowa College, runs follow-up studies on the graduates of his institution's teacher education program, in which he compares an individual's student teaching mark or grade with his superintendent's scale evaluation at the end of the first year of teaching. Coefficients of correlation (1964-1969) have ranged from +.585 in 1964 to +.04 in 1968 (student teaching grade compared with on-the-job rating). He concludes that the method of ascertaining the student teaching grade should be refined to improve its

predictability (Pickett, 1).

Bias or Prejudice When Employing

Aven and Breazier included a sample written evaluation in their questionnaire, and asked the Missouri superintendents what their "reaction would be if, in reading a set of credentials, they found that the person did not receive a letter grade for student teaching, but in its place a pass credit with descriptive evaluation." If a choice were to be made between two candidates for a position, where one had received a pass credit and the other had received a letter grade for student teaching, 98.4% of the officials said they would judge both prospects solely on their credentials and a personal interview, and then make their selection of the one best suited for the position. Only 1.6% of the superintendents said they would automatically eliminate the person with pass credit without further consideration.

Eighty-one per cent stated that a written evaluation (of the sample's caliber) accompanying the pass credit would provide enough pertinent information so as to make a letter grade unnecessary (Aven and Breazier, 47).

Iowa State University conducted a survey during the 1969-1970 academic year of all 29 teacher education institutions in Iowa, and noted that no adverse feedback from employing superintendents had reached the colleges awarding a pass/fail grade for student teaching (Iowa State, 3).

The reactions of school administrators to non-conventional evaluation of student teachers were also measured by Armstrong, at the Center for Educational Research at Salem (Massachusetts) State College. Thirty-two of his sample of thirty-five superintendents reported a favorable reaction to a "pass" (or other non-conventional) grade. Three reported a neutral reaction, while none felt hostile toward this evaluation procedure (Armstrong, 8).

Armstrong also contacted a sample of teacher education institutions across the country and asked if their pass/fail graduates had experienced difficulty in obtaining teaching positions. Not one of his sample reported any problems in this area (Armstrong, 11).

Value of Pass Credit (With Written Evaluation) System

Aven and Breazier also found that 39% of the Missouri superintendents felt that a pass credit and written evaluation were more valuable than a letter grade only. The pass credit with written evaluation was considered by 30% of the employing officials to be as valuable as a letter grade and a written evaluation. Seventeen per cent felt that a letter grade and a written evaluation would be more valuable than a pass credit and a written evaluation (Aven and Breazier, 47).

Grading Policies

Nationwide

Armstrong's study of 93 teacher education institutions (nationwide) found that 61% used a conventional marking scale for student

teaching (Armstrong, 12). Variations of the non-conventional systems included pass/fail, credit/fail, satisfactory/unsatisfactory, honor/pass/unsatisfactory.

Iowa

Martin in 1963 studied the overall off-campus elementary student teaching situation in Iowa in considerable detail. Among his findings was the fact that one of the twenty-four elementary teacher training institutions used a rating scale completed by the supervising teacher and college supervisor, rather than a letter grade. The student teacher was then recorded as either successfully or unsuccessfully completing the student teaching experience (Martin, 150).

Iowa State's survey in 1969-1970 indicated that 5 out of the 29 state institutions are now on the pass/fail system for student teachers (Iowa State, 1).

Letter Grade Distributions

Martin noted that all the directors of student teaching in institutions awarding letter grades for the student teaching experience related that the letter grade B was the most common grade assigned. Eight directors said more marks of A were assigned than marks of C; five directors considered the mark of C to be a poor grade. Two directors reported more letter grades of C were awarded than of A - but that a letter grade of B usually was assigned (Martin, 150).

Attitudes of Student Teachers

Aven, in a follow-up study of the 1968 graduates of Tarkio (Missouri) College's teacher education program, included some information on graduates' attitudes toward the pass/fail marking system for student teaching. (Tarkio had used a pass/fail grade with a comprehensive written evaluation that year). Of these 33 first year teachers, 88% preferred pass/fail as a type of evaluation over a letter grade. Women indicated in 58% of the cases that knowing they would receive a pass/fail evaluation decreased anxiety. Of the men, 86% stated that knowing they would receive a pass/fail evaluation did not decrease the anxiety factor. However, 71% of the men stated that knowing that they would receive a pass/fail evaluation allowed them to undertake meaningful activities rather than just working for a grade (Aven, 11).

The former students were then asked, "What values do you see for receiving a pass or fail credit for student teaching instead of a letter grade?" The females answered the question in the following manner:

Less pressure (12)
No prejudice on part of teacher (2)
Allows more creativity (2)
Student teaching should not require an extrinsic reward (2)
Allows more interest in teaching and less in trying to earn a grade (2)

Males answered the above question as follows:

It is difficult to determine an accurate letter grade for student teaching (5)
Less pressure (4)
Allows person to concentrate on teaching (2)

Summary of Volunteered Comments from Iowa State University's Survey

Iowa State's survey encouraged open-ended comments from the Iowa teacher education institutions. Some of the more illuminating ones are listed below:

A number of students concentrated on obtaining a "good grade" that would qualify them for a certain position, rather than a free-wheeling exploration of all facets of what teaching could or should be like.

A positive reaction to pass/fail. However, some have wished that they could have this count toward raising their gradepoint.

Many students feel that degree of competency cannot be expressed adequately by a pass/fail grade.

A written evaluation is far more elucidating to a prospective employer and tells a lot more about the student than a letter grade can.

Superintendents state that the written recommendations are far more revealing than a letter grade.

The inconsistency never ceases to amaze me.

The importance in evaluating student teaching lies in assessing strengths and weaknesses. These do not really appear in a mere letter grade. A student may not do as well in another situation. It is difficult to assess a student honestly, realistically, and in such a way to give maximum feedback to a school superintendent. A spelling out of strengths and weaknesses, potential, etc., of a student teacher's performance is more telling than a mere letter grade. Besides, the letter grade evaluation seems to have gotten out of hand.

Pass/fail avoids artificial elevation of the gradepoint.

III. PROCEDURE

Introduction

All data were gathered via questionnaires, sent to each Iowa superintendent, each Director of Student Teaching at the twenty-nine teacher education institutions, and to each Director of Placement Services at the institutions. Every attempt was made to simplify the correspondence, and to enhance the probability of return by pre-stamping the questionnaires or enclosing stamped self-addressed envelopes.

The Superintendents' Questionnaire

The instrument used to obtain the employing superintendents' opinions and attitudes concerning the student teaching grading system, and their acceptance of a comprehensive written evaluation of the student teaching experience with a pass/fail grade, was designed as a one-page questionnaire (Appendix C). The questionnaire was mailed with a cover letter (Appendix A) and a sample written evaluation (Appendix B) to all 453 superintendents of schools in the State of Iowa. The cover letter was addressed to each superintendent by name, the writer personally signed each letter, and the endorsement of the director of Secondary Teacher Education at the University of Iowa was noted.

To facilitate ease of response, each questionnaire was designed

to be used as a mailer - the researcher's address was typed on the back, the return address of the school district was imprinted, and a postage stamp was affixed to each questionnaire. It was conjectured that this arrangement, in tandem with the fact that the questionnaire was one page in length, would maximize the percentage of return. The source for data concerning the various school districts was the Iowa Educational Directory, 1969-1970 School Year, published by the State Department of Public Instruction. Mailings occurred in May of 1970.

The questionnaire itself initially asked the respondents to select from several alternative hypothetical distributions the one that most nearly approximated their estimate of the distribution of student teaching letter grades over the past three years. This estimate naturally would have to be based upon either their experience in handling teacher credentials and transcripts, or on their assumptions concerning this distribution. The question was designed to ascertain the assumed distribution of grades, and also to identify those who held erroneous views concerning the actual distribution.

The second, third, and fourth questions were again of a general nature. Respondents were asked to classify the student teaching mark as "reliable," "of some value," or "of little value" in the prediction of future teacher success. The same responses were again offered as choices for the "predictive value (for future teacher success) of the typical recommendation." Respondents were then asked to give their opinion concerning the more reliable predictor

of teacher success, the grade or the recommendation. (The phrase "typical recommendation" was continually employed to distinguish, if appropriate, between the sample written evaluation (Appendix B) and the type of recommendation that is typically encountered.)

Thus, the first four questions were set up to elicit superintendents' responses concerning the existing general state of affairs in regard to the student teaching letter grade. The fifth and sixth questions were based upon the hypothetical situation wherein a "pass" credit had been awarded "for student teaching in lieu of a letter grade, and that a written evaluation of the type enclosed was received as part of the credentials." In question five, respondents were asked to make value judgments comparing the worth of this procedure with: (a) the worth of a letter grade and typical recommendation, and with (b) the value of a letter grade only. In addition, an opportunity was afforded those who vehemently opposed the pass/fail system to register their opposition by choosing the response "automatically eliminate this prospective teacher from further consideration."

The only real reason for question five was to put the respondents in a frame of mind in which they would actually consider the value of a letter grade in student teaching from several viewpoints. Question six, on the other hand, was the focal point of the entire questionnaire. Here, both the preference for a marking and reporting system, and the strength of that preference, could be registered. Respondents were asked to check the foil that most nearly represented

their opinion:

___ I strongly prefer the present grade and recommendation system

___ I prefer the present grade and recommendation system

___ I strongly prefer pass/fail credit and a written evaluation of the type enclosed

___ I prefer pass/fail credit and a written evaluation of the type enclosed

___ I have no preference

The position or title of the person completing the form was then requested.

With the foregoing information, it would be possible to stratify responses to questions by size of school enrollment (hence probable amount of experience with beginning teacher applications), and by response to the first question on grade distribution (if the individual held the opinion that the grade is much more discriminating than is actually the case, less credence would be attached to his preference on question six.) In other words, if a superintendent thought that the letter grade for student teaching told him more about a teacher candidate than it actually did, his rejection of pass/fail credit could very well be based on erroneous assumptions.

The Colleges' Questionnaire

Correspondence with the twenty-nine teacher education institutions in Iowa included an individual cover letter for each college or university which described the research project (Appendix D), one form which asked for information on the grade or pass/fail status and

number of teachers graduated (Appendix E), and a form which could be used to report the distribution of letter grades over the past three years (Appendix F). The latter form was designed to accommodate either single-grade or double-grade reporting systems (some institutions give a double grade such as A/B in order to more finely distinguish between candidates, or to denote a difference in quality of teaching in two different subjects or age groups). A stamped, self-addressed envelope was also provided for convenience of reply. In addition, a copy of the material sent to each superintendent in the state (Appendices A, B, and C) was included for information purposes.

It was decided that a follow-up attempt would be made on the matters of number of teachers graduated and the status of grading systems, but not on the actual forwarding of grades.

The Placement Offices' Questionnaire

In order to cast additional light upon the amount of information available to an employing official, it was desired to determine the nature of the credentials forwarded by the Iowa teacher education institutions. A questionnaire (Appendix G) was sent which listed these choices:

1. This institution forwards recommendations, and a listing of all course work with grades.
2. This institution does not forward grades in courses, but a list of courses taken, and recommendations.
3. This institution only forwards recommendations.
4. Other (please specify).

The number of recommendations normally forwarded was requested, as well as information as to the originators of these recommendations. Again, the questionnaire was self-addressed on the back and pre-stamped so that it could serve as a mailer.

Treatment of Data

The Superintendents' Questionnaire Responses

Each response to the superintendents' questionnaire was recorded as the returns arrived, along with the size of the school enrollment, and the position of the person completing the form. Responses were summed for the entire sample, then the sample was broken down by size of school enrollment. Five enrollment categories were chosen: 0-499 students, 500-999 students, 1000-1999 students, 2000-3999 students, 4000 students and larger. Data were again tabulated in order to possibly draw conclusions concerning effects of school size upon superintendents' opinions.

The sample was once again broken down by the response to the first question (the opinion held as to an estimate of the distribution of student teaching grades). Tabulation of data produced another set of opinions that could be examined for variation, and trends, and which could be matched with the actual distribution of student teaching letter grades received from the colleges and universities.

Question 6, which asked for a preference on grading systems, and also asked for strength of preference, was treated as a dichotomous question after initial tabulation. That is, "no preference" choices

were ignored, and "strongly prefer" and "prefer" were treated as one type of response, in order to conclude the actual preference of the superintendents.

The Colleges' Questionnaire Responses

Data from the colleges and universities were tabulated just as they were submitted. The fact that some institutions assigned one letter grade to each student and others assigned two grades presented a special problem, which was dealt with in the following manner: single grades were first compared among themselves, as were the double grades. Then, a conversion was made to single grades, treating B/C grades, for example, as one-half B, one-half C. Finally, all the grades were tabulated as single grades, with percentages on the overall distribution of student teaching grades being derived from this arrangement of data.

Write-in Responses

Write-in responses were not converted to a "similar" questionnaire choice. Rather, these replies were treated as selections in themselves, and classified accordingly.

IV. FINDINGS

Superintendents' Response

Of the 453 Iowa school districts, 363 responded to the superintendents' questionnaire, or 80.1%. The range of response percentage in the five selected classifications of schools by enrollment varied from a low of 78.0% (1000-1999 enrollment) to a high of 88.0% (2000-3999 enrollment). This was considered to be an excellent result both from the standpoint of the size of the sample, and from the evenness of response among the different categories. The tabulation of response by size of elementary and secondary school enrollment is given in Table 1.

Overall Results from Superintendents' Questionnaire

Estimations of Grade Distributions

Of the 363 responding employing superintendents, 41 or 11.3% thought that the student teaching grade distribution would be 10% A, 20% B, 40% C, 20% D, 10% F. The choice most often selected was 30% A, 60% B, 5% C, 3% D, 2% F, which was chosen by 126 officials, or 34.7%. The total results are listed in Table 2.

Predictive Value of Letter Grades and Recommendations

Only 14.0% thought that the letter grade was a reliable predictor for future teacher success, while 31.2% thought the recommendation was reliable. "Of little value" for the grade was

Table 1

RESPONSE TO SUPERINTENDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE
BY ENROLLMENT OF DISTRICT

Breakdown by size of enrollment:

Enrollment	Number of districts	Number responding	Per cent response
0- 499	116	91	78.5%
500- 999	180	143	79.5%
1000-1999	86	67	78.0%
2000-3999	50	44	88.0%
4000 and larger	21	18	85.7%
Total	453	363	80.1%

Table 2

RESPONDENTS' ESTIMATIONS OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENT TEACHING GRADES AWARDED OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS BY TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN IOWA

	Estimation	Number	Per Cent
1.	10% A, 20% B, 40% C, 20% D, 10% F	41	11.3%
	30% A, 30% B, 30% C, 7% D, 3% F	58	16.0%
	30% A, 60% B, 5% C, 3% D, 2% F	126	34.7%
	45% A, 50% B, 4% C, 1% D	75	20.6%
	50% A, 45% B, 4% C, 1% D	22	6.1%
	55% A, 40% B, 4% C, 1% D	26	7.2%
	* "no opinion"	15	4.1%
		363	100.0%

* selected by write-in

chosen by 12.4%; only 3% made this choice concerning the recommendation. (See Table 3). It appears that the letter grade holds up rather poorly next to the typical recommendation.

It was ascertained that 86.8% of the officials thought the recommendation was more reliable as a predictor than the letter grade.

Preferences Between P/F, and the Letter Grade

As depicted in Table 4, 50.4% of the respondents felt that the pass credit and written evaluation combination was more valuable than the letter grade and recommendation system, and only 14.3% thought it was less valuable. There was little question as to the value of the pass credit and written evaluation combination over the letter grade only (68.9%). Only 3 of the 363 superintendents would have "automatically eliminated the prospective teacher from further consideration" if the teacher's degree was received from an institution that gave a pass credit for student teaching. At this point it may be said that a hostile attitude toward the pass/fail system described in this study certainly is not readily discernible, if it indeed exists.

Table 5 describes the preferences selected on question 6 - between the present letter grade and recommendation system, and pass credit and a written evaluation of the type attached as Appendix B. Only 8.5% <u>strongly</u> preferred the letter grade system, while 26.4% <u>strongly</u> preferred the pass credit system described

Table 3

RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS CONCERNING THE PREDICTIVE VALUE (FOR FUTURE TEACHER SUCCESS) OF THE STUDENT TEACHING GRADE, AND THE TYPICAL STUDENT TEACHING RECOMMENDATION

2. What is your opinion of the predictive value (for future teacher success) of the grade a person currently receives for his student teaching experience?

A reliable predictor	51	14.0%
Of some value as a predictor	267	73.6%
Of little value as a predictor	45	12.4%
	363	100.0%

3. What is your opinion of the predictive value (for future teacher success) of the typical recommendation you have seen concerning an individual's student teaching experience?

A reliable predictor	113	31.2%
Of some value as a predictor	238	65.5%
Of little value as a predictor	11	3.0%
* "no opinion"	1	0.3%
	363	100.0%

4. Which is more reliable?

Grade more reliable	35	9.6%
Typical recommendation more reliable	315	86.8%
* "equally reliable"	13	3.6%
	363	100.0%

* selected by write-in

Table 4

RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS CONCERNING A "PASS" CREDIT FOR STUDENT TEACHING ACCOMPANIED BY A WRITTEN EVALUATION

5. Suppose that a prospective teacher had been given a "pass" grade for student teaching in lieu of a letter grade, and that a written evaluation of the type enclosed was received as part of the credentials. Please check the line(s) which depict your view(s):

I would automatically eliminate this prospective teacher from further consideration	3	0.8%
This pass credit and written evaluation combination is:		
more valuable than a letter grade and typical recommendation	183	50.4%
as valuable as a letter grade and typical recommendation	124	34.2%
less valuable than a letter grade and typical recommendation	52	14.3%
* "no opinion"	4	1.1%
	363	100.0%
more valuable than a letter grade only	250	68.9%
as valuable as a letter grade only	31	8.5%
less valuable than a letter grade only	32	8.8%
* "no opinion"	50	13.8%
	363	100.0%

* selected by write-in, or left unmarked

Table 5

RESPONDENTS' PREFERENCES CONCERNING THE PRESENT GRADE AND RECOMMENDATION SYSTEM COMPARED WITH PASS/FAIL CREDIT AND A WRITTEN EVALUATION

6. Which best describes your opinion?

I strongly prefer the present grade and recommendation system	31	8.5%
I prefer the present grade and recommendation system	78	21.5%
I strongly prefer pass/fail credit and a written evaluation of the type enclosed	96	26.4%
I prefer pass/fail credit and a written evaluation of the type enclosed	129	35.6%
I have no preference	27	7.4%
*I prefer the present grade and a written evaluation of the type enclosed	2	0.6%
	363	100.0%

* selected by write-in

herein. A "preference" for the letter grade system was indicated by 21.5%, while 35.6% preferred the pass credit and evaluation. 7.4% were neutral on the matter.

When the "strongly prefer" and "prefer" choices were combined ("no preference" and write-ins being ignored), 32.6% desired the present letter grade and recommendation system, while 67.4% preferred the pass/fail system and a written evaluation of the type enclosed with the questionnaire. (These results are shown in Table 6).

It would be well to continually emphasize that the choice offered in this study was not merely a "grade" or "pass/fail" choice. The choice was "grade and typical recommendation" or "pass credit and a written evaluation of the type enclosed" (Appendix B).

Results from Superintendents' Questionnaire When Size of School Enrollment is Considered

Estimations of Letter Grade Distributions

When the sample responses were stratified into five categories of school enrollment (0-499, 500-999, 1000-1999, 2000-3999, 4000 and larger), the most noticeable result was that the superintendents of the smaller schools tended to lean more toward a bell-shaped distribution (17.6%) of student teaching grades than did the employing officials of the larger schools (see Table 7). The most popular choice in all categories was the 30-60-5-3-2 per cent distribution for the letter grades of A-B-C-D-F, respectively.

Table 6

RESPONDENTS' COMBINED PREFERENCES CONCERNING THE LETTER GRADE AND RECOMMENDATION SYSTEM COMPARED WITH PASS/FAIL CREDIT AND A WRITTEN EVALUATION

6. Which best describes your opinion?

Either strongly prefer, or prefer, the present grade and recommendation system	109	32.6%
Either strongly prefer, or prefer, pass/fail credit and a written evaluation of the type enclosed	225	67.4%
	334	100.0%
	* + 29	
	363	

* 29 "no preference" and write-in selections are not considered

Table 7

RESPONDENTS' ESTIMATIONS OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENT TEACHING GRADES, STRATIFIED BY SIZE OF SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Response (A-B-C-D-F)	Enrollment									
	0-499		500-999		1000-1999		2000-3999		4000 and larger	
10-20-40-20-10	16	17.6%	13	9.1%	8	11.9%	4	9.1%	0	
30-30-30-7-3	14	15.4%	28	19.6%	8	11.9%	3	6.8%	5	27.8%
30-60-5-3-2	28	30.8%	43	30.0%	28	41.8%	21	47.7%	6	33.3%
45-50-4-1	21	23.0%	34	23.8%	9	13.4%	8	18.2%	3	16.7%
50-45-4-1	5	5.5%	6	4.2%	5	7.5%	4	9.1%	2	11.1%
55-40-4-1	3	3.3%	11	7.7%	7	10.5%	3	6.8%	2	11.1%
* "no opinion"	4	4.4%	8	5.6%	2	3.0%	1	2.3%	0	
	91	100.0%	143	100.0%	67	100.0%	44	100.0%	18	100.0%

* selected by write-in

Predictive Values of Grades and of Recommendations

As shown in Table 8, a greater percentage of officials from all sizes of schools except the largest selected the recommendation as being "reliable" as a predictor, than selected the letter grade as "reliable." Officials in the largest districts showed a one-third choice of "reliable" for both the grade, and for the recommendation. The vote of least confidence in the letter grade came from the small schools - 8.8% chose "reliable" to describe the grade's predictability for future teacher success. In general, the trend remains evident toward the recommendation as a better predictor of teacher success.

When a forced choice was made between the letter grade and the recommendation as to their reliability as a predictor, the results showed an overwhelming selection of the recommendation. In addition, for four groupings, the percentages were practically the same. The grouping of "4000 and larger" was not in the same proportion as the other four (66.7% compared to 88%) in its choice, but still selected the recommendation by 66.7% to 22.2% (see Table 9). It would be well to note that this sample size is 18, the smallest of the five.

Preferences Between P/F, and the Letter Grade

No apparent trends (by size of school enrollment) are noticeable in responses to question 5 (see Table 10), except that the 2000-3999 enrollment group has a much smaller percentage taking an "as valuable" position on the grade and recommendation system compared

Table 8

RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS CONCERNING THE PREDICTIVE VALUE OF THE STUDENT TEACHING LETTER GRADE, AND THE TYPICAL STUDENT TEACHING RECOMMENDATION, STRATIFIED BY SIZE OF SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Response	Enrollment									
	0-499		500-999		1000-1999		2000-3999		4000 and larger	
2. Predictability of the grade:										
Reliable	8	8.8%	16	11.2%	14	20.9%	7	15.9%	6	33.3%
Of some value	66	72.5%	113	79.0%	45	67.2%	31	70.5%	12	66.7%
Of little value	17	18.7%	14	9.8%	8	11.9%	6	13.6%		
	91	100.0%	143	100.0%	67	100.0%	44	100.0%	18	100.0%
3. Predictability of the typical recommendation:										
Reliable	21	23.1%	40	28.0%	26	38.8%	20	45.5%	6	33.3%
Of some value	62	68.1%	100	69.9%	41	61.2%	24	54.5%	11	61.1%
Of little value	7	7.7%	3	2.1%					1	5.6%
* No opinion	1	1.1%								
	91	100.0%	143	100.0%	67	100.0%	44	100.0%	18	100.0%

* selected by write-in

Table 9

RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS CONCERNING THE RELIABILITY OF THE STUDENT TEACHING LETTER GRADE VS. THE TYPICAL RECOMMENDATION AS A PREDICTOR OF FUTURE TEACHER SUCCESS, STRATIFIED BY SIZE OF SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Response	Enrollment									
	0-499		500-999		1000-1999		2000-3999		4000 and larger	
4. Reliability as a predictor:										
Grade more reliable	6	6.6%	12	8.4%	8	11.9%	5	11.4%	4	22.2%
Typical recommendation more reliable	81	89.0%	124	86.7%	59	88.1%	39	88.6%	12	66.7%
* Equal reliability	4	4.4%	7	4.9%					2	11.1%
	91	100.0%	143	100.0%	67	100.0%	44	100.0%	18	100.0%

* selected by write-in

Table 10

RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS CONCERNING A "PASS" CREDIT FOR STUDENT TEACHING ACCOMPANIED BY A WRITTEN EVALUATION, STRATIFIED BY SIZE OF SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Response	Enrollment									
	0-499		500-999		1000-1999		2000-3999		4000 and larger	
5. Eliminate teacher from consideration	0		2		1		0		0	
Compared with grade and recommendation, pass credit and this evaluation is:										
more valuable	49	53.8%	72	50.3%	29	43.3%	24	54.5%	9	50.0%
as valuable	31	34.1%	54	37.8%	24	35.8%	8	18.2%	7	38.9%
less valuable	11	12.1%	14	9.8%	13	19.4%	12	27.3%	2	11.1%
* no opinion			3	2.1%	1	1.5%				
	91	100.0%	143	100.0%	67	100.0%	44	100.0%	18	100.0%
Compared with letter grade only, pass credit and this evaluation is:										
more valuable	62	68.1%	103	72.0%	41	61.2%	33	75.0%	11	61.1%
as valuable	8	8.8%	11	7.7%	8	11.9%	4	9.1%		
less valuable	8	8.8%	10	7.0%	7	10.5%	3	6.8%	4	22.2%
* no opinion	13	14.3%	19	13.3%	11	16.4%	4	9.1%	3	16.7%
	91	100.0%	143	100.0%	67	100.0%	44	100.0%	18	100.0%

* selected by write-in, or left unmarked

with the pass credit and evaluation (the highest percentages occur at each extreme).

On question 6, concerning the preference of the pass/fail system over the letter grade system, the highest percentage (36.4%) strongly preferring pass credit came from the 2000-3999 class (Table 11). The lowest percentage with this choice is 11.1% (4000 and larger class). It appears that officials in the 0-499 class have the least preference for the letter grade system.

The largest percentage of "no preference" responses appeared in the 4000 and larger column. Recall that this is the smallest sample; it was noted that this category of school has the greatest percentage of assistant superintendents and personnel directors completing the questionnaire. In these large districts, the question might arise as to how much follow-up information the employing official may have on a new teacher's performance.

When the choices are combined ("strongly prefer" and "prefer") on this last question (see Table 12), the preference for pass credit and the written evaluation is strongest in the smallest schools at 74.4%, and decreases to a low of 57.2% in the largest districts. However, all five groups preferred the pass credit system described over the letter grade and recommendation.

Results from Superintendents' Questionnaire When Estimation of Student Teaching Grade Distributions is Considered

Predictive Values of Letter Grades and Recommendations

When the responses are classified into six groups by the opinions

Table 11

RESPONDENTS' PREFERENCES CONCERNING THE PRESENT LETTER GRADE AND RECOMMENDATION SYSTEM COMPARED WITH PASS/FAIL CREDIT AND A WRITTEN EVALUATION, STRATIFIED BY SIZE OF SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Response	Enrollment									
	0-499		500-999		1000-1999		2000-3999		4000 and larger	
6. Strongly prefer grade and recommendation system	9	9.9%	12	8.4%	4	6.0%	4	9.1%	2	11.1%
Prefer grade and recommendation system	12	13.2%	32	22.4%	19	28.4%	11	25.0%	4	22.25%
Strongly prefer P/F credit and written evaluation	27	29.6%	35	24.4%	16	23.8%	16	36.4%	2	11.1%
Prefer P/F credit and written evaluation	34	37.4%	54	37.8%	24	35.8%	11	25.0%	6	33.3%
No preference	8	8.8%	9	6.3%	4	6.0%	2	4.5%	4	22.25%
* Prefer present grade and written evaluation	1	1.1%	1	0.7%						
	91	100.0%	143	100.0%	67	100.0%	44	100.0%	18	100.0%

* selected by write-in

Table 12

RESPONDENTS' COMBINED PREFERENCES CONCERNING THE PRESENT GRADE AND RECOMMENDATION SYSTEM COMPARED WITH PASS/FAIL CREDIT AND A WRITTEN EVALUATION, STRATIFIED BY SIZE OF SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Response	Enrollment									
	0-499		500-999		1000-1999		2000-3999		4000 and larger	
6. Either strongly prefer, or prefer, the present grade and recommendation system	21	25.6%	44	33.1%	23	36.5%	15	35.7%	6	42.8%
Either strongly prefer, or prefer, pass/fail credit and a written evaluation of the type enclosed	61	74.4%	89	66.9%	40	63.5%	27	64.3%	8	57.2%
	82	100.0%	133	100.0%	63	100.0%	42	100.0%	14	100.0%
*	+ 9		+ 10		+ 4		+ 2		+ 4	
	91		143		67		44		18	

* 29 "no preference" and write-in selctions are not considered

held concerning the nature of the student teaching grade distribution (or by response to question 1), the "predictive value" choices more or less conform to a consistent pattern (Table 13). The lowest percentage pointing to the letter grade as reliable (11.5%) appears in the column of the highest percent A's estimate (most liberal) of the letter grade distribution. Accordingly, the highest percentage (19.2%) choosing "of little value" for the letter grade as a predictor of teacher success appears in the same column, and the greatest stock in the recommendation is placed by those checking the same 55-40-4-1 percent grade (A-B-C-D) letter distribution (42.3%.)

No one in the 50-45-4-1 class thought the letter grade was reliable. In all cases, the letter grade received a lesser vote of confidence than did the recommendation.

As would be expected concerning a choice of greater reliability, those picking the bell-shaped distribution leaned more toward the letter grade than did their colleagues (Table 14), but still overwhelmingly selected the recommendation as the more reliable predictor of teacher success (75.7% to 21.9%). Of those selecting the most liberal letter grade distribution, not one thought the grade more reliable.

Preferences Between P/F, and the Letter Grade

As the estimate of grading distributions becomes more top-heavy (see Table 15), responses to question 5 follow the general trend toward an increasing dependence on the recommendation.

Table 13

RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS CONCERNING THE PREDICTIVE VALUE OF THE STUDENT TEACHING LETTER GRADE, AND THE TYPICAL STUDENT TEACHING RECOMMENDATION, STRATIFIED BY ESTIMATIONS OF STUDENT TEACHING LETTER GRADE DISTRIBUTIONS*

Response	% A-B-C-D-F											
	10-20-40-20-10		30-30-30-7-3		30-60-5-3-2		45-50-4-1		50-45-4-1		55-40-4-1	
2. Predictability of the grade:												
Reliable	8	19.5%	11	19.0%	16	12.7%	9	12.0%	0		3	11.5%
Of some value	28	68.3%	43	74.1%	97	77.0%	54	72.0%	18	81.8%	18	69.3%
Of little value	5	12.2%	4	6.9%	13	10.3%	12	16.0%	4	18.2%	5	19.2%
	41	100.0%	58	100.0%	126	100.0%	75	100.0%	22	100.0%	26	100.0%
3. Predictability of the typical recommendation:												
Reliable	13	31.7%	20	34.5%	37	29.4%	19	25.3%	5	22.7%	11	42.3%
Of some value	24	58.5%	38	65.5%	89	70.6%	50	66.7%	16	72.8%	14	53.9%
Of little value	4	9.8%					5	6.7%	1	4.5%	1	3.8%
**No opinion							1	1.3%				
	41	100.0%	58	100.0%	126	100.0%	75	100.0%	22	100.0%	26	100.0%

* 15 "no opinion" write-ins on grade distributions are not considered
** selected as a write-in choice

Table 14

RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS CONCERNING THE RELIABILITY OF THE STUDENT TEACHING LETTER GRADE VS. THE TYPICAL RECOMMENDATION AS A PREDICTOR OF FUTURE TEACHER SUCCESS, STRATIFIED BY ESTIMATIONS OF STUDENT TEACHING LETTER GRADE DISTRIBUTIONS*

Response	% A-B-C-D-F											
	10-20-40-20-10		30-30-30-7-3		30-60-5-3-2		45-50-1		50-45-4-1		55-40-4-1	
4. Reliability as a predictor:												
Grade more reliable	9	21.9%	7	12.1%	9	7.1%	4	5.3%	3	13.6%		
Typical recommendation more reliable	31	75.7%	50	86.2%	114	90.5%	65	86.7%	19	86.4%	26	100.0%
**Equal reliability	1	2.4%	1	1.7%	3	2.4%	6	8.0%				
	41	100.0%	58	100.0%	126	100.0%	75	100.0%	22	100.0%	26	100.0%

* 15 "no opinion" write-ins on grade distributions are not considered
** selected by write-in

Table 15

RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS CONCERNING A "PASS" CREDIT FOR STUDENT TEACHING ACCOMPANIED BY A WRITTEN EVALUATION, STRATIFIED BY ESTIMATIONS OF STUDENT TEACHING LETTER GRADE DISTRIBUTIONS**

Response	% A-B-C-D-F											
	10-20-40-20-10		30-30-30-7-3		30-60-5-3-2		45-50-4-1		50-45-4-1		55-40-4-1	
5. Eliminate teacher from consideration	1		0		1		0		0		0	
Compared with grade and recommendation, pass credit and this evaluation is:												
more valuable	18	44.0%	30	51.7%	61	48.4%	41	54.7%	8	36.4%	16	61.5%
as valuable	11	26.8%	19	32.8%	48	38.1%	26	34.7%	11	50.0%	8	30.8%
less valuable	11	26.8%	9	15.5%	17	13.5%	8	10.6%	3	13.6%	0	
*no opinion	1	2.4%									2	7.7%
	41	100.0%	58	100.0%	126	100.0%	75	100.0%	22	100.0%	26	100.0%
Compared with letter grade only, pass credit and this evaluation is:												
more valuable	21	51.2%	38	65.5%	97	77.0%	52	69.3%	15	68.2%	20	77.0%
as valuable	6	14.6%	3	5.2%	9	7.1%	7	9.3%	4	18.2%	1	3.8%
less valuable	5	12.2%	7	12.1%	7	5.6%	8	10.6%	2	9.1%	0	
*no opinion	9	22.0%	10	17.2%	13	10.3%	8	10.6%	1	4.5%	5	19.2%
	41	100.0%	58	100.0%	126	100.0%	75	100.0%	22	100.0%	26	100.0%

** 15 "no opinion" write-ins on grade distributions are not considered selected by write-in, or left unmarked

As for preferences between the pass credit system and the letter grading system (Table 16), a general consistency still prevails - the more the respondent thinks the letter grade is worth, the less he is inclined to prefer pass/fail. But still "pass credit and a written evaluation" is the choice in all six categories.

The combined responses (Table 17) range from a low of 55.3% for the pass/fail system (bell-shaped letter grade distribution estimate), to a high of 87.0% for the pass/fail system from the most liberal estimators of the letter grade distribution.

It can be said that this stratification of responses has demonstrated an overall consistency in thinking among individual respondents; that is, the questionnaires most likely were not hastily completed.

Distribution of Student Teaching Grades

A total of 15 of the 29 Iowa teacher education institutions replied to their correspondence (Appendices D, E, and F). Over 8000 former student teachers from the past three years comprised the sample, some receiving a single letter grade, others receiving two letter grades for their student teaching experience.

The 29 institutions graduated over 15,000 student teachers in the past three years, with over 12,000 receiving letter grades for student teaching. This gave a sample which comprised 63.8% of the letter grades awarded (see Table 18).

Table 16

RESPONDENTS' PREFERENCES CONCERNING THE PRESENT LETTER GRADE AND RECOMMENDATION SYSTEM COMPARED WITH PASS/FAIL CREDIT AND A WRITTEN EVALUATION, STRATIFIED BY ESTIMATIONS OF STUDENT TEACHING LETTER GRADE DISTRIBUTIONS*

Response	% A-B-C-D-F											
	10-20-40-20-10		30-30-30-7-3		30-60-5-3-2		45-50-4-1		50-45-4-1		55-40-4-1	
6. Strongly prefer grade and recommendation system	7	17.1%	11	19.0%	5	4.0%	3	4.0%	1	4.5%	1	3.8%
Prefer grade and recommendation system	10	24.4%	8	13.8%	30	23.8%	19	25.3%	7	31.9%	2	7.7%
Strongly prefer P/F credit and written evaluation	9	21.9%	9	15.5%	36	28.6%	16	21.4%	9	40.9%	12	46.2%
Prefer P/F credit and written evaluation	12	29.3%	23	39.6%	45	35.7%	31	41.3%	5	22.7%	8	30.8%
No preference	3	7.3%	7	12.1%	9	7.1%	5	6.7%			3	11.5%
**Prefer present grade and written evaluation					1	0.8%	1	1.3%				
	41	100.0%	58	100.0%	126	100.0%	75	100.0%	22	100.0%	26	100.0%

* 15 "no opinion" write-ins on grade distributions are not considered
** selected by write-in

Table 17

RESPONDENTS' COMBINED PREFERENCES CONCERNING THE PRESENT LETTER GRADE AND RECOMMENDATION SYSTEM COMPARED WITH PASS/FAIL CREDIT [illegible] WRITTEN EVALUATION, STRATIFIED BY ESTIMATIONS OF STUDENT TEACH[illegible] LETTER GRADE DISTRIBUTIONS*

Response	% A-B-C-D-F											
	10-20-40-20-10		30-30-30-7-3		30-60-5-3-2		45-50-4-1		50-45-4-1		55-40-4-1	
6. Either strongly prefer, or prefer, the present grade and recommendation system	17	44.7%	19	37.2%	35	30.2%	22	31.9%	8	36.4%	3	13.0%
Either strongly prefer, or prefer, pass/fail credit and a written evaluation of the type enclosed	21	55.3%	32	62.8%	81	69.8%	47	68.1%	14	63.6%	20	87.0%
	38	100.0%	51	100.0%	116	100.0%	69	100.0%	22	100.0%	23	100.0%
**+	3		+7		+10		+6				+3	
	41		58		126		75		22		26	

* 15 "no opinion" write-ins on grade distributions are not considered
** 29 "no preference" and write-in selections are not considered

Table 18

PER CENT OF STUDENT TEACHING GRADES REPORTED

Number of Student Teachers in 1967-1968, 1968-1969, 1969-1970:	15,378*
Number Receiving Letter Grades for Student Teaching:	12,569*
Letter Grades Reported:	8,015
Per Cent of Grades Reported:	63.8%

*Approximate, since some institutions not forwarding the grades estimated their graduate numbers when contacted by telephone.

Distribution of Single Letter Grades

Eleven institutions reported the letter grades of 3113 student teachers (7 had received a "pass" grade or credit because of special administrative arrangements). The distribution is listed in Table 19. The letter grade of "A" was awarded to 49% of the student teachers, while 5% received a "C".

Distribution of Double Letter Grades

Four institutions reported the double letter grades awarded to each of 4909 student teachers (see Table 20). The double letter grade of A/B comprised 32.7% of the distribution, the highest percentage. Only 4.9% were "C/C". 49.3% received either A/A or A/B grades, and 80.2% received B/B or above. (The withdrawal grades were treated separately - it should be noted that these students would most likely have received a D or F grade had they continued in student teaching.)

Distribution of Double Letter Grades after Conversion to a Single Letter Grade Scale

The double letter grades were converted by counting half of their number as the upper grade, and half as the lower grade. For example, 42 A/B's would be converted to 21 A's, 21 B's. Table 20, after conversion, is listed as Table 21. It should be noted that this conversion procedure might not be entirely suitable, since a finer scale is what these institutions really were after when adopting the double letter grade. However, it seemed as practical

Table 19

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENT TEACHING GRADES AWARDED BY ELEVEN IOWA TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS GIVING SINGLE LETTER GRADES DURING THE ACADEMIC YEARS OF 1967-1968, 1968-1969, 1969-1970

Grade	Number Awarded	Per Cent
A	1521	49.0%
B	1423	45.8%
C	154	5.0%
D	7	0.2%
F	1	
	3106	100.0%

Table 20

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENT TEACHING GRADES AWARDED BY FOUR IOWA TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS GIVING DOUBLE GRADES DURING THE ACADEMIC YEARS OF 1967-1968, 1968-1969, 1969-1970

Grade	Number Awarded	Per Cent
A/A	812	16.6%
A/B	1596	32.7%
B/B	1512	30.9%
B/C	674	13.8%
C/C	240	4.9%
C/D	27	0.6%
D/D	9	0.2%
D/F	1	
F/F	1	0.3%
A/C	9	
B/D	2	
	4883	100.0%
W (withdrawal)	26	
	4909	

Table 21

DISTRIBUTION OF DOUBLE STUDENT TEACHING GRADES REPORTED BY FOUR INSTITUTIONS AFTER CONVERSION FROM DOUBLE TO SINGLE GRADING SCALE*

Years: 1967-1968, 1968-1969, 1969-1970

Grade	Number	Per Cent
A	1614	33.1%
B	2648	54.2%
C	596	12.2%
D	23	0.5%
F	2	-
	4883	100.0%
W	26	
	4909	

* A/B was treated as one-half A, one-half B, etc.

as any other method for making comparisons.

Total Combined Distribution of all Letter Grades

Information from Tables 19 and 21 was combined to obtain the totals reported in Table 22. The 15 institutions, with 8015 student teachers, registered 39.3% A's, 50.9% B's, and 9.4% C's. (Referring to Table 17, this distribution falls between columns 3 and 4. These respondents selected pass credit over the letter grade system by almost 7 to 3).

Extremes in Institutional Grading Distributions

The most liberal institution (pertaining to grading policies for student teaching) awarded 69.4% A's (see Table 23) and 28.2% B's. The least liberal institution assigned 31.6% A's and 64.0% B's.

Status of Pass/Fail Policies

As of 1 May 1970, 5 of the 29 teacher education institutions were awarding a "pass" or "fail" mark for student teaching, which affected approximately 1020 students each year (see Table 24). Twenty-four awarded letter grades to approximately 4180 student teachers per year.

As for future plans, two institutions will install pass/fail student teaching marking procedures in September of 1970. This will encompass the professional training of approximately 1340 student teachers each year. In September of 1971, another institution will also award a "pass" or "fail" mark affecting

Table 22

TOTAL DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENT TEACHING GRADES IN FIFTEEN INSTITUTIONS AFTER CONVERSION FROM DOUBLE TO SINGLE GRADING SCALE

Years: 1967-1968, 1968-1969, 1969-1970

Grade	Number	Per Cent
A	3135	39.3%
B	4071	50.9%
C	750	9.4%
D	30	0.4%
F	3	-
	7989	100.0%
W	26	
	8015	

Table 23

DISTRIBUTIONS OF STUDENT TEACHING GRADES IN THE INSTITUTIONS AWARDING THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF "A" GRADES, AND THE LOWEST PERCENTAGE OF "A" GRADES*

	Range	
Grade	Per Cent	Per Cent
A	69.4%	31.6%
B	28.2%	64.0%
C	2.4%	4.4%
D		
F		
	100.0%	100.0%

* Includes conversion (A/B counted as one-half A, one-half B, etc.)

Table 24

STATUS OF STUDENT TEACHING MARKING POLICIES IN THE TWENTY-NINE IOWA TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Status as of 1 May 1970

	Number of Institutions	Approximate Number of Students Affected
Award Pass/Fail	5	1020 per year
Award Letter Grades	24	4180 per year

Future Plans

	Number of Institutions	Approximate Number of Students Affected
Will award Pass/Fail Sept. 1970	2	1340 per year
Will award Pass/Fail Sept. 1971	1	650 per year

approximately 650 student teachers per year.

Contents of Teacher Credentials

The placement offices of the 29 institutions reported the nature of the materials normally forwarded as credentials. The results are listed as Table 25. Only 7 include the letter grades earned by students, and 3 do not even forward lists of courses completed. In the latter cases, a summary is sent, e.g., "32 hours of English." The most common response was "recommendations, and a list of courses taken."

Table 25

CONTENTS OF NEW TEACHER CREDENTIALS FORWARDED BY THE PLACEMENT OFFICES OF THE TWENTY-NINE IOWA TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Contents	Number of Institutions
Recommendations List of courses taken Grades in courses	7
Recommendations List of courses taken	19
Recommendations only	0
Recommendations Summary (grouped by hours in a subject area) of courses taken	3
	29

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

It should again be emphasized that "written evaluation" refers to an evaluation of the type enclosed with the superintendents' questionnaire (Appendix B).

Summary

The student teaching experience presents the prospective teacher with an opportunity to function in a situation closely related to an actual day-to-day classroom setting. It is generally accepted to be the most valuable offering in the teacher preparation program. Most institutions have awarded a letter mark for student teaching, just as for any conventional course. Experiences of employing officials, and some research, have shown that the correlation between the letter grade or mark received for student teaching, and actual teaching success, has been low. In particular, a study at Tarkio (Missouri) College has shown that superintendents have low regard for the student teaching letter grade as a predictor of future teacher success.

Moreover, some indications pointed to the possibility that the assignment of student teaching marks had gotten out of hand; i.e., most of the marks awarded seemed to be "A" or "B" letter grades. Unfortunately, no research has been available to either support this contention, or disprove it.

In some colleges and universities, letter grades for courses have been abolished in favor of a pass/fail system. It has been argued that student teaching lends itself most readily to this type of evaluation, and that a comprehensive written evaluation of the teacher's performance should be the discriminating instrument among student teachers. However, the question has arisen as to how this procedure would be received by employing superintendents - whether a teacher with a pass credit in student teaching (rather than a letter grade) would be in a position of disadvantage concerning employment. Although it has been shown that Missouri superintendents would not be prejudiced against this procedure, no studies were available concerning the opinions of Iowa superintendents.

Accordingly, the main objectives of this study were:

1. To ascertain the distribution of the student teaching letter grades in the 29 Iowa teacher education institutions for the years 1967-1968, 1968-1969, and 1969-1970.

2. To ascertain the estimate held by Iowa employing superintendents concerning the nature of this distribution.

3. To ascertain the predictive value (for future teacher success) attached to the student teaching letter grades by the Iowa employing superintendents, compared with the predictive value of the typical recommendation.

4. To ascertain the preferences of Iowa employing superintendents concerning:
   a) the present letter grade and recommendation system
   b) the pass/fail system and a comprehensive written evaluation of the student teaching experience.

Some sub-objectives of the study were:

a) to ascertain the range of student teaching letter grade distributions by institution.

b) to ascertain the contents of credentials forwarded by placement offices of teacher education institutions in Iowa.

c) to discover if size of school enrollment would have any effect on superintendents' attitudes concerning pass/fail grading of student teachers.

d) to ascertain the present status of, and future plans for, the pass/fail student teaching grading system at the 29 Iowa teacher education institutions.

The superintendents' opinions and preferences were obtained by the use of a questionnaire (Appendix C), which sought responses concerning the estimated student teaching letter grade distribution, preferences between recommendations and letter grades, and a preference between the letter grade with recommendation system and the pass/fail system with a comprehensive written evaluation of the student teaching experience. A sample written evaluation was enclosed.

The participating colleges reported their student teaching grades and pass/fail status via questionnaire; the placement offices also reported via questionnaire.

More than 80% of the Iowa superintendents responded. Over 10% of them believed that the distribution of student teaching grades is roughly bell-shaped; the largest percentage (34.7%) thought a 30% A, 60% B, 5% C, 3% D, 2% F distribution was closest to the actual recent distribution of student teaching letter grades. The majority (86.8%) believed that the recommendation was a better predictor of future teacher success than the student

teaching letter grade.

About half of these Iowa superintendents thought the pass credit and written evaluation combination was more valuable than the letter grade and recommendation, and regardless of size of school enrollment, superintendents preferred the pass credit and written evaluation combination. Officials in smaller schools had a tendency to prefer the pass credit and written evaluation combination by a slightly greater percentage than officials in larger schools.

There was a consistent stratification of responses of superintendents by estimation of the distribution of student teaching letter grades. That is to say, the more top-heavy the estimated distribution of student teaching letter grades, the less confidence was placed in the grade as a predictor of future teacher success, and the greater was the preference for the pass credit with written evaluation combination. No matter what response to estimation of grade distribution was chosen, pass credit with written evaluation was still preferred.

Eleven teacher education institutions reported approximately 4000 student teaching single letter grades for the years 1967-1968, 1968-1969, and 1969-1970, which produced a total distribution of approximately one-half A's, less than 5% C's, with the remainder being B's. The 4 reporting institutions awarding approximately 4000 double letter grades for student teaching (the same 3 years) assigned the double letter grade of B/B or higher to 4 out of 5 student

teachers. A wide variation in the distributions of student teaching letter grades at the 15 reporting institutions was noted.

Conclusions

Based on the sample responses forwarded by 80.1% of the Iowa employing superintendents, on over 8000 of the approximately 12,000 student teaching letter grades awarded in Iowa in 1967-1968, 1968-1969, and 1969-1970, and on information received from the 29 teacher placement offices in Iowa, the following conclusions were reached:

1. The distribution of the student teaching letter grades awarded by the 29 Iowa teacher education institutions for the three year period mentioned is approximately 40% A, 50% B, 9% C, 1% D or F. (This distribution was obtained by combining single and double letter grades). The single letter grade distribution is about 49% A, 46% B, 5% C. The double letter grade distribution includes over 80% B/B (or higher) double letter grades. Again only 5% were double letter grades of C/C.

2. More Iowa employing superintendents (34.7%) chose the response 30% A, 60% B, 5% C, 3% D, 2% F than any other as an estimation of the three year student teacher letter grade distribution. As a general statement, it can be said that the superintendents tend to underestimate the number of A's awarded.

3. The Iowa employing superintendents attach a much greater predictive value for future teacher success to the typical recommendation they encounter than to the student teaching letter grade,

by approximately 7 to 1.

4. The Iowa employing superintendents prefer the pass/fail system with a written evaluation of the student teaching experience to the present letter grade and recommendation system by approximately 2 to 1.

5. There is a wide variation in the distribution of student teaching letter grades among Iowa teacher education institutions. In this sample of 15 institutions, the distributions ranged from approximately 70% A's, 28% B's, 2% C's, to approximately 30% A's, 65% B's, 5% C's.

6. The contents of beginning teacher credentials, as forwarded by the 29 Iowa teacher education institutions, furnish the employing school official with varying degrees of information concerning the applicant. Three institutions forward recommendations and only a summary (grouped by hours in a general subject area) of courses the applicant has completed, 19 institutions forward recommendations and a listing of courses completed, while only 7 institutions send recommendations, a listing of courses completed, and the letter grades received in those courses.

7. The size of school enrollment apparently has little effect on the preference of pass credit with a written evaluation over the letter grade and recommendation system. However, officials in the smaller schools tend to have a somewhat greater preference for pass credit with a written evaluation of the student teaching experience.

8. There is an increasing trend toward a pass/fail grade for student teaching in Iowa teacher education institutions. As of 1 May, 1970, 5 of the 29 institutions awarded a pass/fail mark for student teaching, which affected approximately 1 out of every 5 Iowa student teachers. Within two years, over half the student teachers in Iowa will receive a pass/fail grade for student teaching, if reported plans materialize.

9. It can be said that as presently assigned, the "C" letter grade for student teaching in Iowa is tantamount to failure.

10. Superintendents whose estimation of the student teaching grade distribution is closest to the actual distribution calculated from the sample observed, have the greatest preference for pass/fail - approximately 7 to 3.

Implications

During the course of the study, the writer became convinced that certain aspects of the findings had important implications for the teaching profession:

1. This study indicates that the distribution of student teaching letter grades in Iowa is such that little discrimination among teaching candidates is accomplished. In addition, only 7 of the 29 Iowa teacher education institutions include the student teaching letter grade with the credentials forwarded to employing superintendents. Accordingly, the letter grade does not offer employing officials much assistance in selecting beginning

teachers. Furthermore, this situation can even be said to have adverse effects on the profession of education. When a college or university student can anticipate that the professional semester in education will give him a chance to "raise his gradepoint by student teaching," there is no question that the claim to professionalism among teachers is damaged. Therefore, this writer submits that the letter marks or grades awarded for the student teaching experience in Iowa, as presently assigned, have little (if any) demonstrated positive value, and in fact, a strong case can be made concerning their negative value.

2. Of all the activities and courses in a teacher's preparatory program, the laboratory experience of student teaching seems to lend itself the least to quantitative measurement by a simple A, B or C. Boykin pointed out in the Thirty-Ninth Yearbook of the Association for Student Teaching that "much of the material needed for evaluation requires the use of data which have not as yet been reduced to a quantitative basis." (Boykin, 21.) At this point in time, the writer submits that a comprehensive qualitative written evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of a student teacher is a much more feasible evaluative device, at least until (and if) research on teacher effectiveness can quantitatively describe degrees of possession of certain talents, abilities, and traits existing among various proficiency levels of teachers.

3. The fact that some teacher placement offices forward only a "summary" of courses completed by the student (e.g., "28

hours of history") with credentials further complicates the employing officials' efforts to choose a teacher for a particular position. It is this writer's opinion that it is no longer sufficient to merely request a "history teacher" or an "English teacher" - the type of history, and the type of English, must be included in the job description. Therefore, the areas of academic concentration in the various subjects must be known to the employing superintendent.

4. It was noted by the writer while tabulating the superintendents' questionnaire responses that approximately 10% of the officials saw fit to write in comments such as, "I don't see recommendations as analytical as this very often" - "... some recommendations are so general that I don't know whether they're written concerning a junior high teacher with a history major or an elementary teacher with a German major." Although this was not a part of the study's objectives, the fact that this amount of unsolicited comments occurred would suggest that a study should be conducted to determine just what information is presented in a sample of recommendations. If indeed a number of recommendations are so general as to be of little use to employing officials, the reason for this may have been pinpointed by an American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education study. This work found that college supervisors in 121 teacher education institutions spent a median of 4.4 hours observing each student teacher (AACTE, 31). The question may arise as to whether this is enough time upon which

to base judgment of the student's teaching ability. Again, perhaps a study concerning the amount of time college supervisors in Iowa actually spend observing student teachers could be undertaken; possibly a correlation study between time spent with the student teacher, and a measure of the quality of the ensuing recommendation or evaluation, could be undertaken.

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APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER SENT TO EACH SUPERINTENDENT IN IOWA

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240

College of Education

Dear

There appears to be an increasing trend in higher education to grade course work on a pass/fail basis. A few teacher education institutions are now giving a pass/fail grade accompanied by a written evaluation of the type enclosed for the student teaching experience, in lieu of a letter grade and recommendation. Some investigations seem to indicate that the student teachers feel less pressure and operate more naturally in the classroom under this arrangement.

I am a graduate student at the University of Iowa, working toward the Educational Specialist degree. As a degree requirement, I am conducting some research under Dr. John McAdam. Would you please take a few minutes to read the enclosed sample evaluation of a student teacher's performance, mentally compare it with typical recommendations you have seen, and answer the questions on the enclosed questionnaire? (Note that the questionnaire serves as its own pre-stamped mailer.)

I assure you that any individual replies will be treated as strictly confidential, and that no reference will be made to any one school system.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Tom Meskel
University Schools
Iowa City, Iowa
52240

P.S. If you prefer to have the official in your system whose primary responsibility is the screening of applicants for teaching positions complete the form, please feel free to do so.

Endorsed:

Dr. John E. McAdam
Director of Secondary Education
University of Iowa

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE WRITTEN EVALUATION OF A STUDENT TEACHER

Sample Written Evaluation

Name: Robert Gibbet

Degree: B.S.

Major Area: Mathematics

Evaluation of Overall Performance: Pass Credit

Evaluation of Student Teaching Performance by Supervisor:

Bob Gibbet was given as one assignment an advanced algebra class consisting of 22 boys and girls. These college-oriented students were predominantly children of parents in the professions, were from middle to upper middle-class homes, and were approximately 90% white. Bob got along very well with these students, both in and out of class, and obviously enjoyed this teaching assignment. He knew his subject matter well and did an acceptable job of anticipating possible trouble areas for the students. His classes were initially lecture-oriented, but he eventually became reasonably adept at handling discovery situations. He seemed to be well-versed in contemporary learning theory - in fact, he prepared a programmed instruction pamphlet on the operation of the slide rule which was rather well done.

Bob's other class consisted of 28 seventh grade boys and girls, mostly white lower middle class. He was not as successful with this group. He initially experienced great difficulty in trying to come down to their level of interest and comprehension - frankly, he never really accomplished this objective. In addition, he soon had a number of discipline problems on his hands, mainly because he would over-react to situations and make threats he couldn't carry out.

Bob should become an excellent upper-division algebra and analysis teacher. He has average potential as a geometry teacher. Bob has been encouraged to round out his mathematics background with a course in general physics - and at least one course in statistics. He is not suited for junior high classes, and by his own admission has no interest in this age group.

Bob got along very well with other teachers, volunteered to help chaperone several times, and in general seemed to identify with the senior high school setting. He was always punctual, responsible, and neatly dressed. Bob keeps up to date by reading professional journals, and can intelligently contribute to discussions on education in general and mathematics education in particular. He is ambitious and willing to work.

With routine supervision and encouragement, Bob Gibbet can be a valuable asset to a senior high school.

APPENDIX C

SUPERINTENDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions 1-4 are of a general nature. Questions 5 and 6 refer to the sample evaluation enclosed.

---

1. Which line most nearly approximates your estimate of the distribution of elementary and secondary student teaching grades awarded over the past three years by teacher education institutions in Iowa?

_____ 10% A, 20% B, 40% C, 20% D, 10% F
_____ 30% A, 30% B, 30% C, 7% D, 3% F
_____ 30% A, 60% B, 5% C, 3% D, 2% F
_____ 45% A, 50% B, 4% C, 1% D
_____ 50% A, 45% B, 4% C, 1% D
_____ 55% A, 40% B, 4% C, 1% D

2. What is your opinion of the predictive value (for future teacher success) of the grade a person currently receives for his student teaching experience?

_____ a reliable predictor
_____ of some value as a predictor
_____ of little value as a predictor

3. What is your opinion of the predictive value (for future teacher success) of the typical recommendation you have seen concerning an individual's student teaching experience?

_____ a reliable predictor
_____ of some value as a predictor
_____ of little value as a predictor

4. In your opinion, which is more reliable as a predictor of future teacher success?

_____ the grade given for the student teaching experience
_____ the typical recommendation given for the student teaching experience

---

5. Suppose that a prospective teacher had been given a "pass" grade for student teaching in lieu of a letter grade, and that a written evaluation of the type enclosed was received as part of the credentials. Please check the line(s) which depict your view(s):

_____ I would automatically eliminate this prospective teacher from further consideration.

This pass credit and written evaluation combination is:

_____ more valuable than a letter grade and typical recommendation
_____ as valuable as a letter grade and typical recommendation
_____ less valuable than a letter grade and typical recommendation.

] check one

_____ more valuable than a letter grade only
_____ as valuable as a letter grade only
_____ less valuable than a letter grade only.

] check one

6. Which best describes your opinion?

_____ I strongly prefer the present grade and recommendation system
_____ I prefer the present grade and recommendation system
_____ I strongly prefer pass/fail credit and a written evaluation of the type enclosed
_____ I prefer pass/fail credit and a written evaluation of the type enclosed
_____ I have no preference.

Please fold, staple, and mail.

THANK YOU.

_____
position of person completing form

APPENDIX D

COVER LETTER SENT TO EACH IOWA TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240

College of Education

June 18, 1970

Dear

I am a graduate student at the University of Iowa, working toward the Educational Specialist degree in Secondary Administration under Dr. John McAdam. As part of my research paper, I would like to ascertain the actual distribution of all elementary and secondary student teaching grades awarded by the twenty-nine teacher education institutions in Iowa for the years 1967-1968, 1968-1969, and 1969-1970, and compare this with the assumed distribution held by the state's employing superintendents.

I further intend to determine the superintendents' opinions concerning the predictive value (for future teacher success) of the student teaching grade compared with the predictive value of the typical recommendation, and to ascertain their preference concerning the present letter grade and recommendation system compared with a pass/fail grade accompanied by a written evaluation of the student teaching experience. (Enclosed is a copy of the material sent to each superintendent in Iowa.)

Could I ask for your cooperation? I would need a listing by years of the actual (elementary and secondary) grades awarded for the student teaching experience by your institution during the past three years. (A form is provided that you may wish to use.)

I assure you that the grade distribution within any particular institution will not be published by itself, and that no attempt will be made to compare distributions.

Please return the enclosed form(s) in the stamped envelope provided.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Tom Meskel
University Schools
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

APPENDIX E

FORM USED FOR INSTITUTIONS TO REPORT MARKING STATUS

Please check the appropriate blank(s), record the requested information, and return in the enclosed envelope.

_____ 1. This institution will cooperate in your study. The elementary and secondary student teaching grades (listed by year for 1967-1968, 1968-1969, and 1969-1970) are listed on the enclosed form.

_____ 2. This institution will not participate in your study.

_____ 3. This institution has been on the pass/fail basis for student teaching since _____. We have graduated
date

_____ student teachers in 1967-1968, _____ in 1968-1969,
number number

and _____ in 1969-1970.
number

Number of "fails" issued: _____(67-68), _____(68-69),

_____(69-70).

Reception by employing superintendents has been:

_____excellent; _____good; _____poor; _____unknown.

_____ 4. This institution anticipates installing the pass/fail procedure for student teaching by _____.
date

_____ 5. We would like a summary of your findings.

Comments:

_____
signed

THANK YOU.
Tom Meskel
University Schools
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

P.S. If you are aware of related research in this area, I would appreciate your mentioning the writings.

APPENDIX F

FORM USED FOR INSTITUTIONS TO REPORT GRADE DISTRIBUTIONS

Grade reporting form you may wish to use for reporting elementary and secondary student teaching grades.

1967-1968	1968-1969	1969-1970
No. of teachers_____	No. of teachers_____	No. of teachers_____

Please complete either Part I or Part II:

Part I

(If matched pairs are given as grades)

	Number(67-68)	Number(68-69)	Number(69-70)
A/A	_____	_____	_____
A/B	_____	_____	_____
B/B	_____	_____	_____
B/C	_____	_____	_____
C/C	_____	_____	_____
C/D	_____	_____	_____
D/D	_____	_____	_____
D/F	_____	_____	_____
F/F	_____	_____	_____

Part II

(If matched pairs are not used, or are not easy to record)

	Number(67-68)	Number(68-69)	Number(69-70)
A	_____	_____	_____
B	_____	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____
D	_____	_____	_____
F	_____	_____	_____

Thank you for your cocperation.

Tom Meskel
University Schools; Iowa City, Iowa 52240

APPENDIX G

PLACEMENT OFFICES' QUESTIONNAIRE

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240

College of Education

To the Director:

I am a graduate student at the University of Iowa, working toward the Educational Specialist degree in Secondary Administration under Dr. John McAdam. I am writing a research paper as a degree requirement, and need some information concerning teacher credentials to complete my study. Would you be kind enough to take a few minutes to describe the content of the teacher credentials you forward to employing superintendents?

_____1. This institution forwards recommendations*, and a listing of all course work, with grades.

_____2. This institution does <u>not</u> forward grades in courses, but a list of courses taken, and recommendations*.

_____3. This institution only forwards recommendations*.

_____4. Other (please specify):

*_____ recommendations are normally sent, written by: _____
number positions

_____
of persons writing recommendations (e.g., critic teacher, college supervisor of student teaching, subject area professor, etc.)

Note that this questionnaire serves as its own pre-stamped mailer. Please fold, staple, and mail.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Tom Meskel
University Schools
Iowa City, Iowa 52240